

**Preliminary Amendment**  
**U.S. Patent Appl. Serial No. 09/652,793**

Applicant notes that the present application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/698,148, filed August 15, 1996, now U.S. Patent No. 6,199,045, as indicated in the Patent Application Bibliographic Data Sheet filed March 22, 2001. The Examiner is respectfully requested to acknowledge Applicant's claim to priority under 35 U.S.C. §120 in the next communication.

Filed concurrently herewith is payment of an excess claim fee in the amount of \$372.00 for thirty-two claims in excess of twenty (\$288.00) and two independent claims in excess of three (84.00). Applicant remains entitled to the small entity fee schedule.

In view of the above, the present application should now be in condition for early action on the merits, and favorable action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



---

Patrick J. Finnegan  
Registration No. 39,189

EPSTEIN, EDELL, SHAPIRO, FINNAN & LYTLE, LLC  
1901 Research Boulevard, Suite 400  
Rockville, Maryland 20850-3164  
(301) 424-3640

Hand Delivered: May 14, 2002